

down an African-American basketball coach in Illinois, it's the same thing.

So somebody will say, "Well, why did you go there?" Say, "Well, that crowd did a pretty good job, and I'm better off than I was 7 years ago, and the whole country is." But the main thing is, we have a profound responsibility to meet the big challenges of the future: the aging of America, the children of America, the balancing of work and family, growing the economy and the environment, bringing opportunity to poor areas, and building one America.

That's why I came down here tonight. I'm not running for anything, but I haven't done all this work to see it squandered by people who lose their concentration. If the election is about the right subject, we will win. And you have helped us immeasurably tonight. But I ask now for your voice, your compassion, and your consistent commitment all the way to November of 2000.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:13 p.m. at a private residence. In his remarks he referred to reception hosts Chris and Irene Korge and their children Andrew, Kristina, and Angela; and Gene Prescott, president, Biltmore Hotel.

### **Interview With Mark Knoller and Peter Maer of CBS Radio in Orlando, Florida**

*December 11, 1999*

#### **Domestic Challenges**

**Q.** President Clinton, thank you very much for joining us for this special interview with CBS News. Heading into the next century, beyond your immediate goals for the rest of your term, what do you think are the one or two top domestic challenges facing the country?

**The President.** I think the aging of America and the children of the country. It's ironic that we seem to be growing at both ends. We're going to double the number of people over 65, and yet, we have the largest group of schoolchildren in our country's history in our schools, the first group bigger than the baby boomers, and they're much, much more diverse. They come from more different ethnic and racial and religious backgrounds. And

I think that dealing with them are the two biggest things that ought to be on the front burner.

I also believe that, related to that, obviously, as you've heard me say many times, is the challenge of continuing to grow the economy while reaching out into poor areas, continuing to improve the environment, and paying the debt off. I think those are the big, big challenges.

#### **New Millennium**

**Q.** Mr. President, one of the things I've noticed about these celebrations that the White House, you, and the First Lady are planning is that it's propagating the myth that January 1st is the start of the new millennium and the new century. Are you guilty of creating that erroneous impression?

**The President.** Yes. I mean, I think basically, by common consent, everybody decided that we ought to celebrate the millennium on January 1, 2000, even though most of the strict correctionists say that it's January 1, 2001.

**Q.** Well, they're right, aren't they?

**The President.** Well, apparently, that was the prevailing view among the experts, but the people have expressed a different wish, so we're going with the folks. We've got a democracy here, and that's the way we're going. It will be nice for me, maybe I can do it twice, and I'll be a President of two millennial changes.

#### **Power of the Presidency**

**Q.** Well, looking ahead into the next century, whenever it begins, where do you see the power of the Presidency itself evolving? Is it going to change?

**The President.** Oh, yes, it's always changing. But I think it will always—at least for the future that I can foresee—will continue to be an extremely important office. I think that a lot of the executive actions will be important, along with getting along with Congress. I think that building partnerships with the private sector will become more important. It will become more important to mobilize the American people and to organize them to meet the challenges in the future the way we've done.

For example, maybe a good example would be the way we've worked on wiring the schools, where we did—the main Government thing we did was to change the law so that we have this E-rate now in poorer schools and hospitals.

**Q.** You mean wiring for the Internet?

**The President.** Yes, wiring for the Internet. Poorer schools and hospitals can get a discount rate. Then we go out and try to hustle up all the equipment and the Internet connections and get everybody to do that. So I think you'll see a lot more of that.

The other thing I think you will see is, I believe the world is growing ever more interdependent, so I think the President, in order to effectively lead the world, will have to be an increasingly effective negotiator, conciliator, bringing people together, working people together. And I think it will be just as important 30 years from now for America to be involved in the rest of the world as it is now. But I think it will be an increasingly interdependent world that will require powers of persuasion and not just unilateral power.

#### ***Final Year of President's Term***

**Q.** Next year is also, as you well know, the final year of your Presidency. Do you find that in any way liberating to try and do things that you weren't able to do in the first years of your Presidency?

**The President.** I don't know if I find it liberating. I find it—it's concentrated my attention and my energies and, obviously, since I'm not running, I could do things in an election year that might be difficult to do otherwise. But if you go back, I mean, we've taken a lot of controversial decisions. That's one of the reasons we lost the Congress in '94; we took on the gun lobby and the health care lobby and the deficit issue at the same time, and it was more than the system could bear, I think.

But I do think that I am acutely mindful of the fact that I have 14 months left, and that I need to be out there squeezing the most out of every day. And I need to get as much done as I can for the American people, to try to leave our country in the best possible shape so that the next President and the next Congress will be even freer than

they are to basically look with a visionary eye to the future and take on the big issues. That's the theme that I had today in Florida; that's the theme that I try to echo everywhere.

I believe that this really is the only time in my lifetime we've had so much prosperity, social cohesion, and national self-confidence, with the absence of internal crisis or external threat. I will get as much done on these big challenges as I can. But after I'm out of office and there is a new team in, I still think it's very important that they keep the American people focused on these big issues in the 21st century, because a society rarely has the luxury of having the tools and the space to deal with these long-term challenges that we now have. And I think it's very important that we seize it.

#### ***Gays in the Military***

**Q.** Let me ask you one specific, if I may, on the question of gays in the military. As you no doubt know, the First Lady this past week was critical of the "don't ask, don't tell" policy. She said it just doesn't work. You weren't going to institute that at the beginning of your Presidency, anyway. Why not use the last year of your Presidency to institute an end to discriminatory discharges against gays in the military? And what do you think of what the First Lady said this week?

**The President.** First of all, I'm quite sympathetic with what she said. I think—that was the position that both of us brought to the White House. But I think there's one thing that may be not clearly understood. The reason that I went for "don't ask, don't tell" is that it's all I could do because I had a clear signal from the Congress that if I implemented my policy, they would reverse it by overwhelming majorities.

I didn't implement "don't ask, don't tell" until the Senate voted 68–32 against the policy that I wanted. So I think it's very important—for me, what's important is that the policy, as implemented, does not work as I announced it and as the leaders of our military at that time in '93 pledged to implement it.

I can only hope this last brutal beating death of a gay soldier will give some sobering impetus to a reexamination about how this

policy is implemented and whether we can do a better job of fulfilling its original intent.

Let me remind you that the original intent was that people would not be rooted out; that they would not be questioned out; that this would be focused on people's conduct, and if they didn't violate the code of conduct, and they didn't tell, that their comings and goings, the mail they got, the associates they had, that those things would not be sufficient to kick them out of the military or certainly subject them to harassment.

So what I would like to do is to focus on trying to make the policy that we announced back in '93 work the way it was intended to, because it's way—it's out of whack now, and I don't think any serious person can say it's not.

**Q.** How are you going to do that, sir?

**The President.** Well, we're working with the Pentagon now to do it. I mean, I think there's a greater awareness now that it's just not—it's not being implemented as it was announced and as it was intended.

Now, as for—but I don't have any problem with what she says, because that's—after all, that's what I said back in '93, and if anybody—you know, if there's a sense in the Congress or in the next White House that that ought to be done, then maybe together they'll have enough votes to do it.

#### **Middle East Peace Process**

**Q.** You mentioned earlier the importance of future Presidents becoming even more mediators and conciliators on the world scene. This coming week, of course, Syria and Israel are going to be at the White House. And I know you told us at the news conference you've taken a blood oath to avoid discussing details of those long-stalled talks, the renewal of them, but how do you plan—just in general, since you don't want to go into details—how do you plan to get this process moving and keep it moving when you get these gentlemen sitting down again?

**The President.** Well, I want to get them together, let them talk, and get them to try to agree on an agenda and a timetable. They know what the issues are, and they know what the options are for resolving the issues. And my experience has been that competent people—and you're dealing with two highly

competent people here; I mean, these people are good in what they do in representing the interests of their countries—and that when—they don't go into these negotiations without some idea about where they want to finish and some idea about where they'll have to give, and whether the other person will give, and how it will all play out.

So on the other hand, it is difficult, but not as complex, in my view, as the Palestinian negotiations with Israel. So I would like to see them get together, talk together, get to know each other a little better, and agree on an agenda and a timetable, and then take a couple of days off and go back and meet with their respective teams to decide where they're going to start and where they're going to stop, and come back here and just look to burn through it, just keep going until we get the thing done.

**Q.** Why is the time right now?

**The President.** I think because both leaders, for different reasons, finally have this sense of urgency, and I think they should have a sense of urgency. And I think they know that the enemies of the peace process are gearing up; they want to try to derail it, and not just for the Palestinians. I think that they know that there is a sense of hope and possibility now, and I think they believe that Prime Minister Barak is committed to trying to resolve all this, just like he said he was.

#### **Russian Espionage**

**Q.** Mr. President, is there any doubt in your mind, sir, that Russia is responsible for the listening device that was discovered at the State Department? And to what extent are you disturbed by it? Don't we all do the same things, spy on each other?

**The President.** I think when—we have always taken spying seriously and taken appropriate action, and I think they will take appropriate action in this regard. And I have no reason to believe that the press accounts on this are not accurate.

**Q.** You must be concerned, though, about this big security breach in the State Department.

**The President.** Well, I certainly wish it hadn't happened, but I think they learned something about this. I think now they'll figure out how to deal with this technology, and

it won't happen again. And I think we just have to—look, the consequences of all this, while certainly not good, are not as dire as they were in the dark days of the cold war when both of us were spying on each other in a much more sweeping way. And we had ways of dealing with it. And there's sort of an established protocol for dealing with this kind of thing, and I think we ought to do it. And the main thing we ought to do is learn whatever we can from the incident—how did they do this; how did they get away with it; how can we prevent it from happening again?

**Q.** What effect will it have on American relations with Russia?

**The President.** Based on what I now know, I think we should proceed where it's in our interest to do so in our relations with Russia; and where we have differences of opinion, we ought to proceed to articulate them. You can't let every spy case affect the larger national interests in the country.

#### **Private Life/Public Record**

**Q.** Mr. President, a couple more reflective questions. Based on your own experiences over the years, going back to your first campaign, to what extent do you think a politician's private life should become part of the public record?

**The President.** Oh, I don't know. I think I'll let the press and the people decide that. I think—let me say it in a different way—I think that what I have seen too often is that the politics of personal destruction become the preferred option only when people think they can't win the old-fashioned way; they can't win on the issues or whatever.

Now, a person—I'm not talking about whether somebody's robbed a bank or something like that, but I think that the pendulum swung pretty far over in the last three or four elections, and I think it's swinging back now. And I think that's what the voters are saying, and they'll try to get it right. But something ought to be genuinely relevant, and we ought to not just target people for no good reason and just pound on them and use that because they couldn't win the old-fashioned way. I think that both the politicians and the press should be mindful of that.

But it will get sorted out. These things come and go. You know, early in the 1800's,

we had several years where this sort of thing was all the rage, completely dominated the political debate. And then it sort of faded away again. And these things come and go, and the underlying health of our democracy and the common sense of our people have always been enough to see us through, and I think they will be here.

#### **Former Independent Counsel Kenneth Starr's Statement**

**Q.** What do you make of the recent statement by Ken Starr that he thinks you ought to get right with the law by admitting in a public way that you were not truthful in your statements under oath?

**The President.** I'm not sure that I know what to make of Mr. Starr.

**Q.** You know, he's giving interviews. He's doing talk shows.

**The President.** No, but it's a free country.

**Q.** Why do you think he's still pursuing this after he's resigned his office?

**The President.** I just don't think I can serve any useful purpose by commenting on it now. Maybe I should follow his lead; when I don't have a job, I can comment on it more.

#### **Post-Presidential Plans**

**Q.** Speaking of that, as we wind up here, besides getting your Presidential library off the ground, what is Bill Clinton going to do with the rest of his life?

**The President.** Well, I hope I'll be a member of the Senate spouses club. That's one of the things I really hope I'll be. And I say that—we're laughing, but I'm dead serious about that. I want to do what I can to help Hillary. And getting this library and public policy center up and going and having it continue the best missions of my Presidency I think will be quite time consuming.

I hope I'll have a little more time for my family and my friends, but I still want to be a good citizen. I really admire what Jimmy Carter's done with his life. I wouldn't necessarily choose the same endeavors, although I've supported Habitat for Humanity, and I certainly believe that if someone needed me in the future to monitor an election or something like that, I ought to be willing to do it.

But the main thing I want to say is that he has said—the life he has lived has been a life of service, and he said—he’s also had a very interesting life. I mean, he’s had time to go climb up to the base camp of Mount Everest; he goes fishing and does the things that he loves to do, he goes skiing. But he has lived a life of service. And he has recognized that it is an incredible gift to have the chance to be President and that, when you have this gift for 4 or 8 years, you learn things; you know things; you have a perspective that no one else has the chance to develop. And you can’t just walk away from it and not at least make yourself available. If people don’t want you to do anything, that’s one thing. But at least you ought to be available for public service. And Jimmy Carter has lived a life of public service.

I admire that, and I hope that when I leave here, I will be able to do a lot of the personal things I’m interested in but, fundamentally, help in a way. I don’t want to be under foot for the next President. I don’t want to get in anybody’s way, but I do think there’s a lot of good things I can do for the world and for our country, and I intend to try to do what I can.

### ***Advice for Future Presidents***

**Q.** Finally, sir, I know it’s 14 months away, but what advice do you have for your successor and your successors as the last President of this century? What thoughts do you have to pass on to them?

**The President.** I think it’s very important for a President to have a sense of history and a sense of the future. You have to know where your country is at this moment in our journey. You have to know what the lives of the American people are like. Then you have to have a vision of what you think it ought to be. And once you do that, once you’re grounded in the facts and the history and you have a vision of what you think you ought to be, then you need to have a lot of ideas and a lot of energy and a lot of interpersonal skills, and you just need to go to work every day and never forget your mission, because all the pressures, in political life, on the Chief Executive is at the center of the vortex of—all of these things are designed to make you forget your mission. And those who remem-

ber their mission and stay on it tend to do very well, even under the most adverse circumstances.

You know, Lincoln once said in the Civil War, he said, “My policy is to have no policy; I am controlled by events.” And to some extent that was true. He was being very flexible and the Government was a much more rudimentary enterprise than it is today. But to some extent, he was being disingenuous, because his policy was: “I am going to save the Union; if I have to burn every wheat field in this country and if I have to give up my own life to do it, we will not be split.”

Okay, so he knew where he was in history—you know, if you listened to him, he talked about George Washington a lot; he had this sense of—he knew about the future. He signed the moral Land Grant Act. He was all for the railroads and the public improvements. He had a lot of imagination about the future, Lincoln did, and he said there won’t be any future unless we hold together, no that’s my policy, and I’m willing to try anything or anybody or any general to get it done.

The thing that made him great was he never forgot what his mission was. He was grounded in history. He had the vision of the future. He used to say he kept regular office hours—my office in the White House on the second floor is in Lincoln’s waiting room, which was later the Office of the President through Theodore Roosevelt. But Lincoln used to keep regular office hours with people that wanted a job in a post office or something, because he said he wanted to be reminded on a regular basis of what the daily concerns of people were, and he wanted the war to be over so everybody could be restored to pursuing those daily concerns.

So anyway, that’s one specific, very big example of what I think the general rule is. You’ve got to understand your country’s history, have some idea of your country’s future, have a vision of where you want it to go, come up with a set of ideas and a good team, and just pursue it with all the energy and focus you can and have a good time doing it. That’s my advice. Don’t forget the mission; don’t forget who you work for.

**Q.** We’re honor bound to break this off, sir, but we’re very grateful for your time.

**Q.** Thank you very much for doing this.  
**The President.** I've enjoyed it. Thank you.

NOTE: The interview began at 11:25 a.m. in the Human Resources office at the Wyndham Palace Resort on December 11 but was embargoed for release until 12:01 a.m. on December 13. In his remarks, the President referred to Prime Minister Ehud Barak of Israel; and Minister of Foreign Affairs Farouk al-Shara of Syria. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

### **Statement on Signing the Deceptive Mail Prevention and Enforcement Act**

*December 12, 1999*

Today I have signed into law S. 335, which contains the Deceptive Mail Prevention and Enforcement Act. Too often, consumers—especially the elderly—either understand sweepstakes mailings to mean that they have won large prizes or else spend their savings on unwanted merchandise and publications in the hope of increasing their chances of winning. Too often, mailing and sweepstakes practices seem designed to mislead.

This legislation will protect Americans against those who use sweepstakes and mailings to deceive and exploit the unwary. It will establish standards for sweepstakes mailings, skill contests, and facsimile checks; restrict “government look-alike” documents; and allow individuals to have their names and addresses removed from sweepstakes mailing lists if they choose. Disclosures will make clear that no purchase is necessary to enter a sweepstakes and that a purchase will not improve a consumer's chances of winning a prize. The legislation also creates strong financial penalties for companies that do not disclose all terms and conditions of a contest. Individuals will be able to request a stop to certain mailings that come to their homes, and companies will face liability if they do not honor these requests. The United States Postal Service will have enhanced authority to investigate and stop deceptive mailings, and companies will face greater penalties for failing to comply with a Postal Service “stop order.”

I am proud to sign S. 335 into law today to establish a “right to know” for sweepstakes mailing recipients and protect Americans against misleading mailing and sweepstakes practices.

**William J. Clinton**

The White House,  
December 12, 1999.

NOTE: S. 335, approved December 12, was assigned Public Law No. 106–168. This statement was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 13.

### **Telephone Remarks to a Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee Dinner in Houston, Texas**

*December 13, 1999*

Well, I'm glad I got to hear the last of B.A.'s speech, and let me say to all of you, I'm jealous of you. I wish I were there tonight. I had looked forward to being there very much, but I got quite sick with the winter flu, and I've got the Israelis and the Syrians coming in this week, and I have to be well for them. So the doctor said I couldn't get on the airplane.

So I wanted to call and just, first of all, thank all of you for honoring Lloyd and B.A. and for raising so much money for the Democrats in Texas. I think we're going to win the House back in the next election. And I'm doing everything I can to do my part.

But I also want to thank you because of the career and the public service of Lloyd Bentsen, that you honor tonight, because there is a reason we're trying to win the House back—because of the direction we want the country to take in the new century. And everything he has done in his entire career embodies that.

So Lloyd, I miss you, and I love you. And I love you, B.A. I'm sorry I couldn't be there. I'm sick I missed Ann Richards' jokes. [Laughter] And you all owe me a raincheck, just like I owe you one.

Thank you, and God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:17 p.m. in the Residence at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to former Senator Lloyd Bentsen and